which are not considered patentable, steps are taken to assess whether grant of patent can be challenged.

In order to protect our biodiversity and prevent bio-piracy, a legislation on biodiversity with the broad objectives of conservation, sustainable utilisation of biological diversity, and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the use of biological resources is being formulated by the Ministry of Environment and Forests.

FDI in road and port projects

682. SHRI AMAR SINGH: Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have taken any decision regarding automatic approval of 100 per cent FDI in road and port projects:

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it is a fact that most of the project proposals would still be subject to the vagaries of case-by-case clearance and routine opaqueness; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY (SHRI SIKANDER BAKHT): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (d) Government have permitted projects for "construction and maintenance of roads, highways, vehicular bridges, toll roads, vehicular tunnels, ports and harbours" for foreign equity participation upto 100% on the automatic route provided the total foreign equity in any such projects does not exceed Rs. 1500 crore.

Closure of Units

683. SHRI AMAR SINGH: Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) the number of workers/employees rendered jobless as a result of closure of the Units and also due to V.R.S. introduced by the companies during the last five years;

(b) whether Government are aware that a few companies have resorted to closure only to divert their valuable land assets to the real estate market; and

(c) if so, what is the number of such units and Government's reaction in regard thereto?

THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY (SHRI SIKANDER BAKHT): (a) According to information available, under the relevant provisions of the Industrial Disputes Act, a total number of 64,368 workers have been affected due to closure of units during the period 1994 to 1998. Under the voluntary retirement scheme of the NRF, 84,816 workers of Central Public Sector Units have benefited during the period 1993 to 1998.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) Does not arise.

Implementation of package for the North East

684. SHRI KHAGEN DAS: Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a revised North-East Industrial package was announced by Government in December, 1997;

(b) whether it is a fact that most of the announcements made by Government in this regard have not yet been implemented;

(c) if so, what are the reasons for such a long delay; and

(d) by when all the decisions will be implemented?

THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY (SHRI SIKANDER BAKHT): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (d) No, Sir. Most of the necessary notifications including extending transport subsidy scheme, grant